

AGORA

Volume LIII
Spring 2020

Belmont Abbey College
100 Belmont-Mt. Holly Road
Belmont, North Carolina 28012



Belmont Abbey
COLLEGE

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Volume LIII

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THE LITERARY MAGAZINE OF BELMONT ABBEY COLLEGE

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Cover Art:

The Moping Lisa

Amelia SHECHET | Digital Painting

Kate Weaver
Katherine McCarthy
John Paul Hamilton

Amanda Johnson
Sofia Swanson
Justin Halloran
Margaret Boerner
Elijah McBride
Isabella Bruno
Mary Lang
Keegan Reeve
Deanna Torres
Rachel Harr
Kate Weaver
Rachel Lang
John C. Kunich
Theresa Wilson
Sofia Swanson
John Paul Hamilton
Jane Russell
Keegan Reeve
Abigail Fallon

Helen Behe
Marc Chiurco
Cristel Baltazar
Theresa Wilson
Jane Russell
Justin Halloran
Kate Weaver
Marc Chiurco
Kate Weaver
Joseph Hamilton

Gwendolyn Darakjy
Joshua Hren

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Kate Weaver
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Margaret Boerner

Cristel Baltazar

Dr. Rebecca Munro

Michelle Harrison

Gwendolyn Darakjy
Warszawa 1942

Eunjae Benson
Gloria in Excelsis

2020 AGORA STAFF

Editorial Staff

Submissions and File Management

Publicity and Technical Support

Faculty Advisor

Layout and Design

2020 AWARDS

Jean S. Moore Literature Award

The Jean S. Moore Literary Award was established in 1998 in memory of the late Jean S. Moore, an Abbey English Professor. Each year the recipient receives publication in *Agora* and a cash prize. This award is given to top literary submissions in poetry and short fiction as judged by the editorial staff and is based on creativity, skill, and originality.

Agora Art & Photography Award

Each year, the recipient of this award receives publication in *Agora* and a cash prize. This Award represents top submission in art and photography as judged by the editorial staff and is based on creativity, skill, and originality.



Hello! We're happy you can finally read our *Agora*. *Agora*, the ancient Greek marketplace, was the setting of commerce, but also of conversation, art, flurries of rhetoric, philosophical geniuses, prayers to the divine, beautiful simpletons—every voice in the community. This year's *Agora* is similarly a mix. We have no singular theme (although some of us tried our hardest for a “Death section”). We Editorial Elves hardly have a consensus on what our aesthetic principles as a group are. If anything, we follow Dr. Munro, the Empress of the Fair Folk.

Like Touchstone in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Dr. Munro reminds us that “the truest poetry is the most feigning.” Art is a strange, spotted beast—both a lie and a truth. A good piece of art is a myth that gives us new access to reality. As in a last look at the beloved “Theology Library,” art pushes us to encounter something real and true waiting beneath the surface of words. “The Atomists’ Quandary” reminds us that there is more to us than matter and by extension to existence as a whole—hence art. “Warszawa 1942” forces us to encounter the reality of beauty even in places of horror.

This year's deliberations required extensive conversations among ourselves over what submissions were most worthy and which submissions could be enhanced to reach their full potential. The cover choice produced an especially great controversy as we wavered between four choices. The final choice had to fulfill a fourfold aim: it must manifest the fact that *Agora* is a literary journal, spark interest and begin a conversation (and oh boy, did we have one), be beautiful in itself, and communicate as best as possible the overall content of the current issue. In our search, we knew that both we and our submitters operate somewhere between Renaissance masterpiece and T-shirt art. Our choice, “Moping Lisa,” takes a well-known work of art and imbues it with new wit. It brings together disparate works, showing what is so fascinating about the Abbey. It falsifies Leonardo, but shows a bit of the truth behind fake smiles. Try what we may, “Moping Lisa” slunk around and refused to leave. None of us felt particularly “safe” with choosing our melancholic Italian. But just like running a 6:37 mile would be “safe” for a cross-country athlete, it does no good for the team when she knows full well that she ought to be able to run a lower 6 minutes and help the team put its best foot forward. And more than that, it brings no glory to God to stop at *good enough*.

On the part of all the editors and those of us who graduate this year, ending our tenure as Elves, we would like to thank our advisor, Dr. Munro, who is also concluding her reign over *Agora*. This magazine has been a place of growth and joy for us. We leave wiser and more familiar with beauty. And so, we would like to dedicate this edition of *Agora* to her, praying for the best!

Theresa Wilson and John Paul Hamilton

For the Editorial Elves of *Agora*



Azure

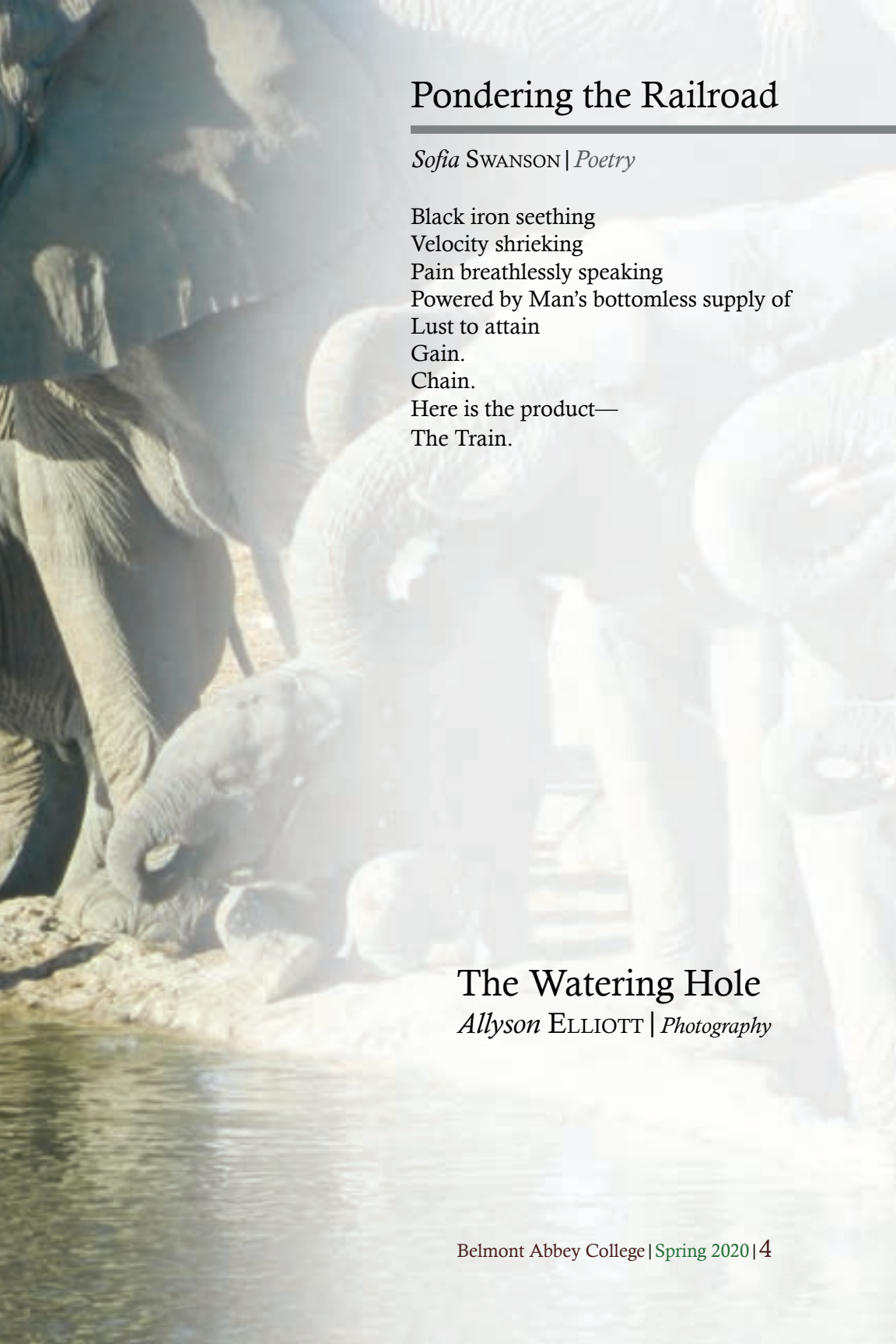
Amanda JOHNSON | *Poetry*

And today,
love hasn't felt so impossible.
The sky stretched
and didn't cry out.
It bled,
but willingly.
It wasn't shy.
It held out its azure palm.
I think I'll take it.

Sentinel

Jane RUSSELL | *Watercolor*





Pondering the Railroad

Sofia SWANSON | Poetry

Black iron seething
Velocity shrieking
Pain breathlessly speaking
Powered by Man's bottomless supply of
Lust to attain
Gain.
Chain.
Here is the product—
The Train.

The Watering Hole

Allyson ELLIOTT | Photography

Pretty Horses

Justin HALLORAN | Poetry

I stood to see her.
Sure fair thing that made my heart beat.
Of painted plains
Were dames of their own nature.
Their place of tossed and foreign manes.

I came from them.
Born in blind windlit life
From the beauty things.
Pumping blood drops from my knife.

Me that little thing of prairies.
That man in boy my mamma raised.
Forgotten frontier traveled, left.
Hung to dry,
Perched upon my sentenced death.

Charred heathen's fire
Little bullet holes.
By random divinity
A pure dream unfolds.

Where soul meets body
In nature's womb.
By and by I'll find my way
Home, amid the bitter cold,
And frozen celestial everglades

Around this fire,
Communal ashes burn new
Ember, glowing never dying
In every morning dew.

Leaf and Spiderwebs after
the Rain

Sharon JOHNS | Photography





Icons

Margaret BOERNER | Poetry

Testify to false gods, children of darkness,
With souls cloaked in lies and damnation.
Kneel with ashen palms towards blackened skies.
Beg and barter while horizon dies.
A sole desire—to see the stars,
But all have drowned in artificial light.

If you told me

Elijah McBRIDE | Poetry

If you told me it was

Tomorrow,

I would wonder until

It arrived.

If you told me it was

Yesterday,

I would reminisce on how I could

Say this or do that a little better.

If you told me I was a

Disaster,

I would sit cross-legged and

Take notes.

If you would be so kind,

Tell me a dream.

If only for one night.

If you told me nothing—

I don't think it would be that bad, but

I would be alone.

Hellscape

Rory WITOWSKI | Painting

The Pier

Kate WEAVER | *Prose*

She wondered how they did this constantly. Didn't it bore them, always coming back? Each time one of them left and returned, she thought about going with them. "Do you want a cigarette?" The smoke always made him angry. Throwing the butt into the water so it would leave and eventually return with those other white-plated vessels. His eyes reflected the blue: everything that had once been between them returned, and everything that had once been between them left. Warm and wet. Didn't it bore her? Left and right the waves moved on and off like lips to a cheek. Her cheek. When the two of them left, she heard him crying, and she knew he wanted to be heard.

A Penny for His Thoughts

Isabella BRUNO | *Photography*





Warszawa 1942

Gwendolyn DARAKJY | *Prose*

their lives were like a rush of pigeons above the huddled city, wings desperately seeking to escape the crowded cramped quarters where death was the postman, like words spilling and tumbling out onto the white pavement, whitewashed pavement, hurrying, flapping, thrashing, suddenly change to ashes.

then a different picture, different but the same. same place. the smell had changed though. their feathers blew quiet and gentle through the streets and brushed at your face as you tried to sleep on a corner. up to the sky and their pinions are desperate no longer.

Urban

Sarah Kathrin BISER | *Mixed Media*



All dismayed and decayed,

Isabella BRUNO | *Poetry*

the wasp's nest vacated.
No longer golden and
humming with busy beings.

Its numerous holes
empty
save for some flies
peeking 'round in the dark.

Still and silent, swaying on
the bare branch turned
brittle in the cold.

A cardinal landed and
disrupted my rumination,
gifting a soft melody that
floated through the air,
Taking my thoughts with it—

Chameleon

Rory WITKOWSKI | *Painting*



She is delayed

Mary LANG | Poetry

and the congregation waits
For revelation of off-white and grace:
Heads turning to closed doors, while, stuck alone
On altar steps, the groom is spooked and thinks
Whether it would be better to dismiss,
Undress to everyday clothes, and find her—
If only to see she hadn't forgot.
And now he is reminding to himself
The way her body fills the air beside him:
Her soul weighs down a place and concentrates
The day, if light is something drawn and breathed,
Reworking fear to show that doubted things
Are words misunderstood, or shadows cast
Beneath a still-closed door: all half-known, half-seen.

Eden

Michelle HARRISON | Drawing



Cold Ends

Keegan REEVE | Poetry

A river sags at cold ends
And seas among drifting corpses.
I sing bygone shades and recent,
Betrayed, made mortal by friends.

No apple now of youth grows,
Ambrosia bloodless turns to food:
On the last day, gods' end destined,
Round Okeanos, fate flows.

An army of men with heaven's gods,
Enraged the herald's grandson slays.

The messenger by men feared,
Against the frost, one-eye hostile,
He by his offspring mischievous
Is slain by dearest one reared.

His other eye, calm with knowledge,
Had seen demise, but would realize
Now: how ferocious foreseen odds!

No man knows living his load
Until it true proved before him.
He carries it without knowing,
No matter Hermes might forebode.





Swiss Bliss

Isabella BRUNO | *Photography*





If Anything . . .

Deanna TORRES | *Poetry*

If anything, I hope you get angry when
you see my face.

I hope your blood boils as I am the only
brown female in your class of all white
students.

I hope you get frustrated when I walk out
with the position we both applied for.

I hope your tongue shrivels as you
pronounce my name.

I hope your ears cringe at the Latin-
flavored music all over the radio.

I hope your stomach starves from our
delicious cuisine.

With all the hatred you have,

I hope you get angry upon realizing that
you're unwillingly, completely engulfed by
my culture you hate so much.

If anything, I hope you get angry.

Distracted: The Eye of The ADD

Sarah Kathrin BISER | *Painting*

C'est Fleurs à Flétrir

Rachel HARR | *Poetry*

The sweet seduction of the Fleurs à Fleurir
Could bud any love like any bud rose
With womanly struts in black pantyhose
And chairs all around to watch the dance near

One day I went in to see all about
The flower-laden walls—the men sat in rows—
But then a masked figure reeled me in close
With her smile, her hair, and men went to shout

“Datura! Datura!” the masked one was
For who could fit a name any better?
The stage—her dance—did not ever fret her
While her enchanting moves proved dangerous.

While the Datura was dancing in pace
She held eyes like fire, like love had no trace
And I will admit, I played a good race
For who could blink first, or at least break gaze

For the moment was only desire
But in that devious, pillowy stare
I fell much in love and tossed away care
But was it truly anything higher?

The night grew long, and as she left her show
She took me by hand, and pulled me away
From worldly troubles of night and day
To show me her truths that I did not know

Her stark and lowly love pierced me true—
Until my heart could hold nothing more
She used me all up—my heart cold and blue
Inside my heart all her pain that she bore



I had no more love, and love's fickle end
Plucked me and cut me all over
Stuck me like green thorns on top a rose bed
“What a pitiless, disgrace of a lover!”

But flowers like these do not bloom forever
So scattered, and tainted with desire
Truly there was nothing about it higher
And as were we, c'est fleurs á flétrir.

Birdie

Amelia SHECHET | Digital Painting

The Atomists' Quandary

Rachel LANG | Poetry

Is a man, after all,
Just atoms in the void?

It must be so, the atomists claim:
All things we sense are from the same.

All difference comes from shape and size:
Nothing grows and nothing dies.

Non-living things fit in this set,
Or so it seems. And yet—

Man's essence seems beyond the reach
Of that which earth and air can teach.

He lives, he breathes, he thinks, he prays.
Does mere matter act these ways?

His intellect—what of man's brain?
It seems much more than flesh explains.

What of man's end? His purpose death?
No man admits who yet draws breath—

The Skull

Rory WITKOWSKI | Watercolor

A Gold-Giver's Death

Kate WEAVER | Poetry

Never-ending serpent
Swirling scales unscathed
Meets his enemy
Clashes are made as lightening rains
Gnashing and wailing
And arms outstretched
Defend, defend the loved and adored
Never-ending serpent's teeth have
Rotted, melted in its core.



A House Divided

Theresa WILSON | *Poetry*

Each simple ruddy brick holds the other in place,
Yet I feel most alone in such colorful company.
Sloped shingles of a roof clash from left to right,
Kind till suddenly turned to rampage by a storm.
When my throat is tickled by autumn showers,
My guttural laugh, only when laughing at myself.
Every time an attempt at reconstruction is made,
My jeers come back in fuller force and the pain—
Do opposites attract, if I repulse myself?
Is this a house fit for God? No a marketplace!
Though I am content in my dilapidating despair,
The foundation obscured, crumbling to disrepair,
Against itself cannot stand.

Weary Walk

John C. KUNICH | *Poetry*

It must have been
A weary walk
From the cross
To back home,
With all my failings
Nailed into
That battered
Blameless
Piece of broken earth.



The Window in the Wall

Abigail FALLON | Painting



Etosha National Park

Allyson ELLIOTT | Photography

Sidereal

Sofia SWANSON | *Poetry*

Don't wait for me,
Or you'll stay an eternity
While I observe the shadows
Smile and flit across the galaxy.
Like a star-struck Jane Goodall,
Precious youth wasted, scribbling field notes
While they tumble and laugh,
It will take me
Just short of forever
To decipher their roguish dance.
So go now, or you'll miss your chance.

Enclosed You Will Find an Empty Envelope
ABLE CAIN'S DEBT COLLECTION AGENCY, LLC
FIRST AND FINAL NOTICE

Dear E.V. E'RYMAN,

Enclosed you will find a past due balance of 1 Sensitive Animal Faculties, 1 Substantial Soul, 1 Duration of Time, and 1 Potentially-Infinite Actualized Potencies.

E.V. E'RYMAN (who is called "the Debtor") owes many things to God (who is called "the Garnishor"). The debts became subject to garnishment on the date of the Debtor's entrance into Earthly Existence 501 (c) (3). Both because of E.V. E'RYMAN's two hundred thousand years of consecutive failure to prove proficient borrower performance, and also on account of the Garnishor's apparent administrative incompetence, starting on day one of Fiscal Year 20__ C.E., all debts owed to the Garnishor shall be retrieved by Able Cain's Collection Agency on the Garnishor's behalf. As a regular recipient and consumer of Earthly Existence, the Debtor has twenty four hours to repay all debts, only the universals of which we have included below for your convenience. For a full listing, please dial 777-777-7777, extension 0101. [Mr. Fred Niche is your assigned collection agent.] At Able Cain's Debt Collection Agency, LLC, we will work with you to make repayment of your debts painless. We know you deserve only the best. If you fail to comply, Able Cain's shall become very wroth, and its countenance shall fall, and it shall rise up against ye and slay ye.

This notice garnishes ALL of the following:

- The Sensitive Animal Faculties, as well as the Vegetative Faculties, of which the Debtor's Matter is formed, and through which the Debtor achieves nutrition, generation, reproduction, mobility, and perception
- The Rational Faculties of the Immaterial, Substantial Soul, source of both the theoretical and practical intellectual capacities, and cause of the Debtor's immortality.
- The Duration of Time, down to the millisecond, during which the Debtor has existed
- All Actualized Potencies and Potentially-Infinite Actualized Potencies, etc.

ENCLOSED YOU WILL FIND AN EMPTY ENVELOPE. WITHIN THE NEXT TWENTY- FOUR HOURS YOU MUST ANSWER THIS NOTICE BY FOLDING BOTH YOUR ESSENCE AND YOUR ACCIDENTS INTO THE EMPTY ENVELOPE ENCLOSED, WHETHER OR NOT YOU BELIEVE YOU HOLD ANY OF THE GARNISHOR'S PROPERTY, WHETHER OR NOT YOUR RATIONAL FACULTY AGREES WITH THE PREMISE THAT ALL CAUSES CAN BE TRACED BACK TO A PRIMUM MOBILE (WHO IS CALLED "THE GARNISHOR"), AND IN FACT WHETHER OR NOT YOU SUBJECTIVELY ACCEPT THE REALITY OF CAUSALITY AT ALL. (PERSONALLY, YOU ARE TECHNICALLY FREE TO PRACTICE ANY NUMBER OF PHILOSOPHICAL POSITIONS, IN PRIVATE, INCLUDING DETERMINISTIC MATERIALISM.) IF YOU DO NOT TRUTHFULLY ANSWER THIS NOTICE, OR DO NOT DELIVER MONEY OR PROPERTY COMMENSURATE WITH THE AFOREMENTIONED DEBTS, YOU WILL BE LIABLE TO ABLE CAIN'S.

If you wish to dispute this claim, you may call either the Garnishor directly or Able Cain's at 777-777-7777. If you suffer from litigiousness, you should contact an attorney immediately. The Garnishor cannot give you any legal advice. Please do not leave vehicles parked on the street. Overnight parking is absolutely prohibited. You are not alone. Please do not leave your children unattended in an effort to gain compliance. Submission of plagiarized existence is a misdemeanor and debtors guilty thereof shall be punished in solitary confinement. Be yourself. No two snowflakes are alike. Submission of plagiarized essence is a felony and debtors guilty thereof shall merit capital punishment. Ex nihilo. Accept this as a small token of our thanks for all of your years making invaluable contributions to the Company (Earthly Existence 501 (c) (3)), all of the hours and hours and (yes we have tallied them) hours when, instead of increasing either funnel or yield you stared, bored, at the big empty white space, unsure anymore whether or with what you could meaningfully and in good conscience fill it, certain, during these seconds that split like uranium atoms in the void that seems to be eclipsing your soul, that you owe the Company nothing and that neither the Company's bosses nor its Alleged Owner have ever given you even close to what you deserve, that, given the (let's be honest) incalculable hours and the indispensable intellectual properties that—though you authored them autonomously—you have forfeited to the Company, and especially given your low salary (typical of so many not-for-profits), you really did make a grave error along the way, you really should have taken the advice your betters gave you before you knew better: declared bankruptcy, thereby freeing you to launch an entrepreneurial enterprise that would have extricated you from the purportedly intractable

elements of Earthly Existence and its award-winning retirement plan Afterlife. Then, being your own Boss and such, this letter would not only not be terrifying but would actually be funny. Funny because you could shred the thing to confetti, confident that neither the Owner nor the Owner's self-identified administrative ambassadors shall garnish you down into the non-entity dust from whence you came, unless you act immediately and tuck both your being and your time spent in Earthly Existence 501 (c) (3) into the enclosed envelope, postage we have pre-paid and provided for you, and will seal shut for you too, E. V. E'RYMAN, once you do as we say, now won't you now, now won't you.

Sincerely,
Ms. Fran K. Afka
Subterranean Solvency Specialization Unit
Able Cain's Collections Agency,
A Sub-Division of AIPOTU
000 Circumlocution Cul-de-sac
Noplace You Know, U.S.A.
777-777-7777 x 1010

Warped
Isabella BRUNO | *Photography*





Digging in the Dust

John Paul HAMILTON | Poetry

I have gone down to the dust of the earth.
To the grey mud yesterday twined into veins and fibers,
Coated with dark plates, then gently rubbed smooth.
An empty plateau for wind to weather.

The old rocks are worn brittle and filled with fissures.
At the dusting edge of a small trench, I kneel
And begin to dig out the rubble.
My hands become as grey as the rock
That crumbles like stubs of spent chalk.
Thick chunks of earth tear off like scabs,
And I find a fossil—an empty cup of a shell.

But I must dig until I reach the foundation.
I will grab the keystone from above
And pull and worm it out.
No more will the mass of the world
Press it down into place—*let this plateau fall*
Like wrath and lightening and mercy.
Why should it be suffered to live and to curse me?
Yes. Let everything become nothing, and nothing, all.

Migration

Abigail HOUSEAL | Photography

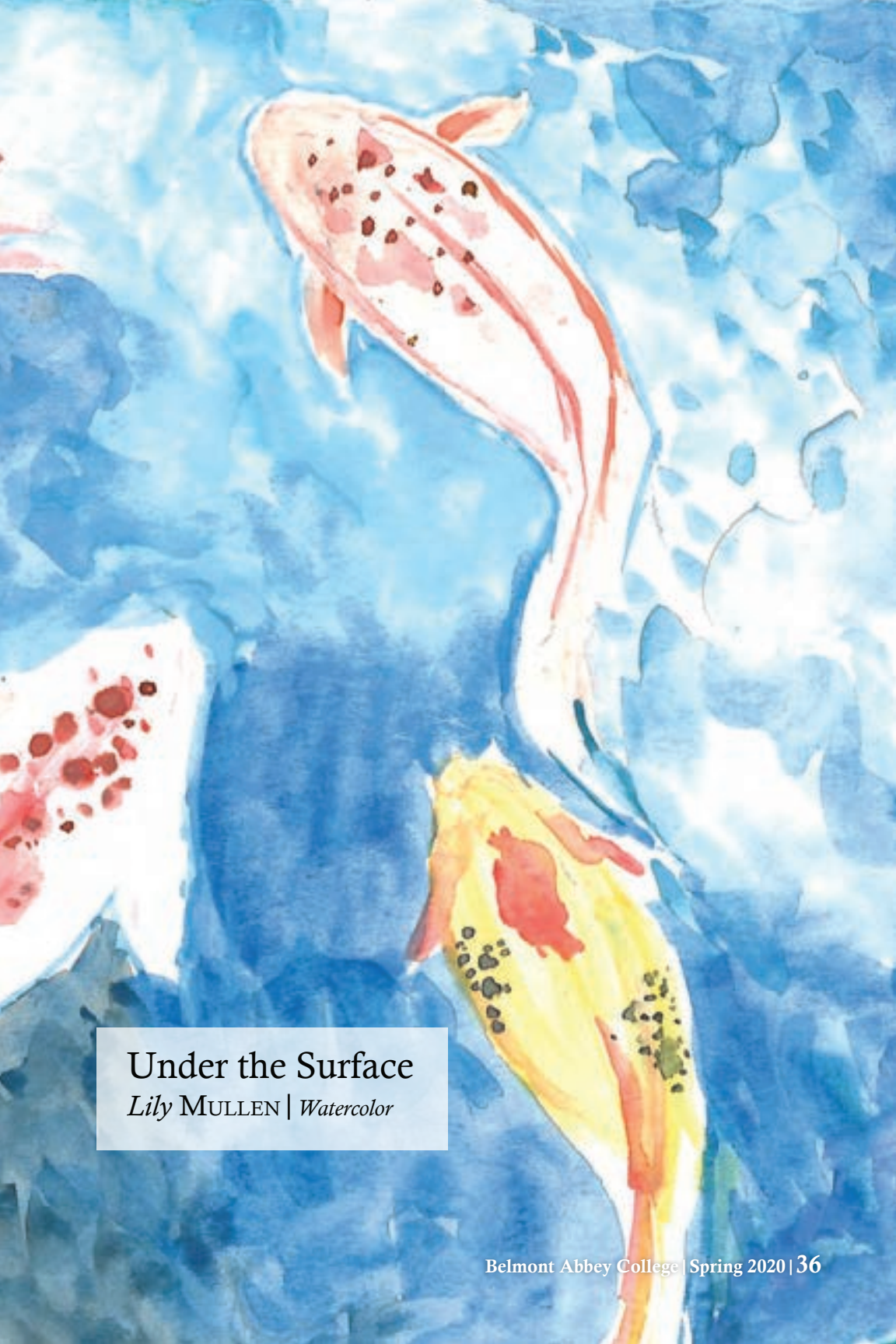


Food Chain Link

Jane RUSSELL | *Haiku Poetry*


The pelican drops
in a sudden lunge. Bam! Some
hapless sea bass—lunch.





Under the Surface

Lily MULLEN | Watercolor



Castle near San Pio

John Paul HAMILTON | *Photography*

Lucca

Keegan REEVE | *Poetry*

While Florence and Venice hold their art,
Ever Lucca holds my heart.
In this undisturbed place,
Throngs of children play and chase.
Yet a ghost, Bonaparte, resides;
Hopes or histories, one decides.
Here speech might take a slower pace
As a greeting from a wrinkled face.
Peer the ring with eager eyes:
That against the green glen lies.
Gaze the famed walls of town,
A rampart of stacked rock around,
Saying, "Not seized again, I defy!
Even a Venice-envied legacy."
Tourists trickle atop the rim
But dare not dictate their wanton whim.





Kindergarten

Katherine McCARTHY | *Short Story*

Two stone cold, sweaty hands clutched the steering wheel. She avoided the rearview mirror—or was it that she was avoiding what would reflect back at her if she peeked through? A car horn blared behind her, and she couldn't remember what color the light was last time she looked. Brake to gas. What had the past five years been for? She couldn't help but feel the waste as one sweaty hand lay in hers, his other, brushing the chain link fence with a stick.

Declan took a seat on the letter “D,” drawn out with primary colors like every other letter on the rug. She kissed his head and walked out the door. Just after crossing the threshold, a familiar cry rang out. She smiled through the car-ride home.

Imminent

Michelle HARRISON | *Painting*

Grounded in People: Based on Aristophanes' Clouds

Abigail FALLON | *Poetry*

A bloke in a basket,
A god among all men.

The heavens spot an ass,
Poised in the open air.

Those boys stared at the dirt,
Eyes focused on the sand.

Who knows what they saw?
Who cares what they found?

When minds obsess in soil,
Souls slight those who surround.

Introspection

Sarah Kathrin BISER | *Mixed Media*



The Spaceship in the Front Yard

Helen BEHE | Poetry

It was almost midnight in mid-July,
And we were all still wide awake,
Something magical was about to happen,
There was no mistake.
We had just started a game of handshadows
While sitting on the bed,
Ditching our exhausting pillow fight
And doing that instead.
When a curious humming noise drifted over
The bedroom window sill,
A series of beeps and bleeps that ended with
A whistle, metallic and shrill.
We rushed to the window, and I thought for sure
That I was seeing things,
For on our lawn sat an honest-to-goodness spaceship
With fireflies floating around its wings.
Being the youngest, I just wanted to be told what to do
By my biggest brother.
There was one thing I knew for sure though, and that
Was to not wake up our mother.
So the three of us tip-toed silently down our staircase
And into the front yard,
Where next to our big oak tree the spaceship sat in a circle
Of grass that was charred.
It was a beautiful thing to see the rocket
Reflecting the light of the moon.
Every constellation sparkling above made it look like
An outer space cartoon.
With a loud hissing noise the spaceship's hatch popped open,
Catching us by surprise,
When no mysterious being came out to greet us,
We decided to take the rocket for a ride.
The oldest fired the thrusters and the middle one
Pulled the throttle.
I pressed my nose to the window and watched as our house
Grew smaller and smaller.
Into space we flew our rocket and through blazing

Bittersweet

Sarah Kathrin BISER | *Painting*

Swaths of stars,
Orion, Scorpius, and Cygnus spangled as we
Took a left at Mars.
We grabbed handfuls of silver stars to
Stuff inside our pockets,
Making time enough to fly past Saturn and
Take a good look from inside our rocket.
The Milky Way was a glowing ribbon with
Tinsel floating through its light;
We three skimming our fingers in its trail is what
I remember most clearly about that night.
After a while I started to yawn and knew we had to
head back soon,
So my oldest brother turned our spaceship homeward
As we waved goodbye to the Moon.

The fireflies were still blinking when we landed back
In the yard.
With whirs and boops and one loud BEEP the spaceship
Hit the ground hard.
I didn't know what time it was, but Mom wouldn't be happy
To find us out of bed,
So quietly as we could, we snuck upstairs,
Our eyes bright with excitement and cheeks glowing red.
I remember that the thought crossed my mind
As I pulled up the covers,
How in the world I'd explain a spaceship in the front yard
To my Mother.
When the three of us woke up the next morning,
We couldn't tell if it was a dream or not,
But I had stardust stuck to my pajama pants,
So that gave us some food for thought.
Then and there we made a pact not to tell anyone about
What had happened last night past eleven o'clock.
We promised it solemnly before heading downstairs to eat
Our Saturday cereal and talk.
We never said a word, even when we heard our parents wondering
About the scorch marks on the lawn.
"Besides, it's much more fun to keep a secret than tell it,"
I said to my brothers with a yawn.



Melody

Marc CHIURCO | *Poetry*

She masks the dissonance in man's mind
Speaks calming whispers to discordant souls
Makes light the heavy hearts with song

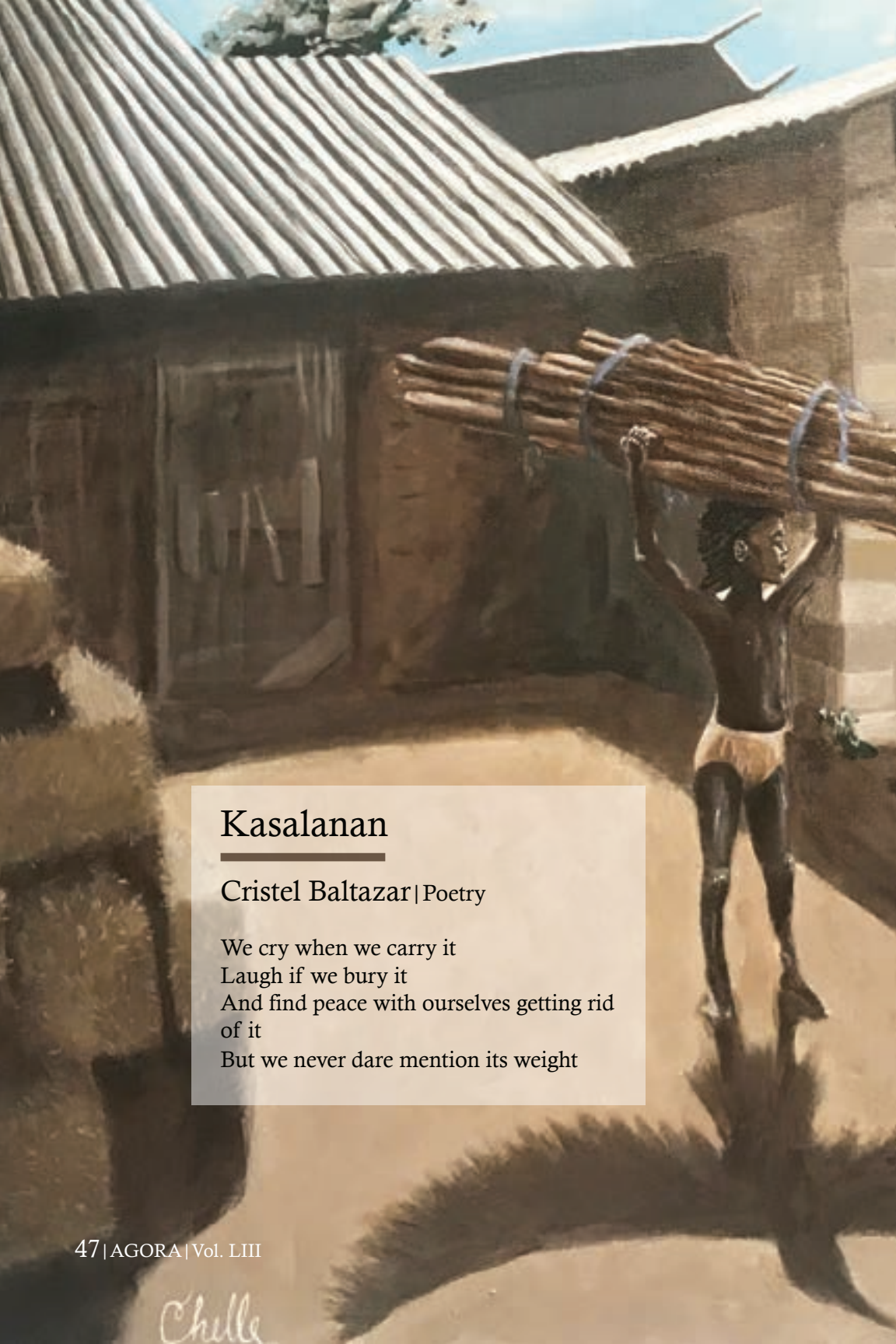
She dances on the ivory keys
And tip toes on the trumpet's valves
She moves along the cello strings
And whistles with the flautist's mouths

Melody, she moves me
Sustains my heart when day is long
I'll cherish her forever
I'll miss her when she's gone

Gothic Portrait

Eunjae BENSON | *Drawing*

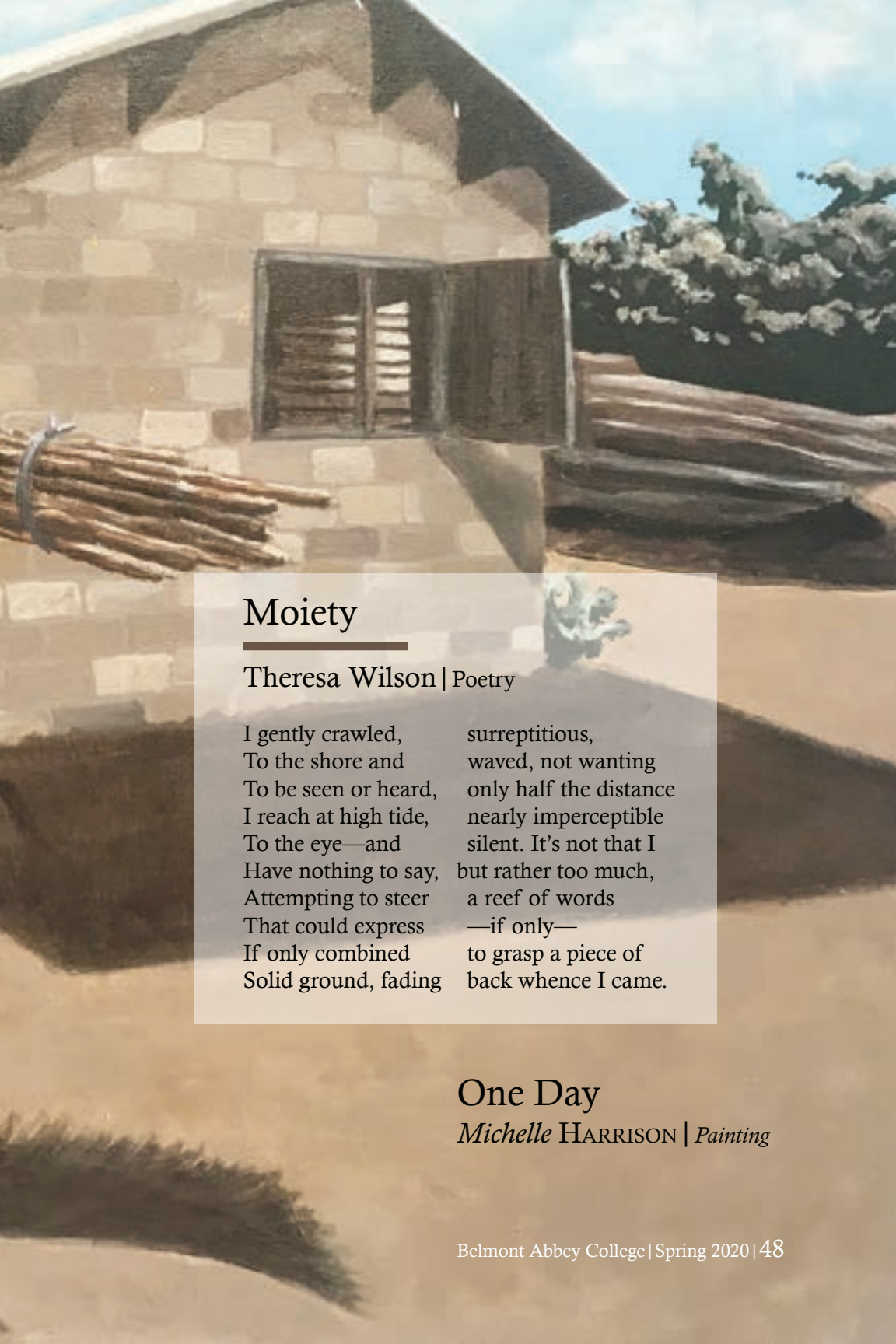


A painting in a warm, earthy tone. A person, seen from the side, is walking towards the right. They are carrying a very large, heavy bundle of long, thin sticks or logs balanced on their head. The bundle is secured with several blue straps. The person is wearing a simple, light-colored loincloth. In the background, there is a building with a corrugated metal roof and a doorway. The ground is a light, sandy color. The overall style is that of a traditional or folk painting.

Kasalanan

Cristel Baltazar | Poetry

We cry when we carry it
Laugh if we bury it
And find peace with ourselves getting rid
of it
But we never dare mention its weight

The background of the page is a painting of a stone building with a window. A bundle of sticks is leaning against the wall on the left. The painting is in a soft, painterly style with visible brushstrokes. The colors are muted, with earthy tones for the building and a pale blue sky.

Moiety

Theresa Wilson | Poetry

I gently crawled,	surreptitious,
To the shore and	waved, not wanting
To be seen or heard,	only half the distance
I reach at high tide,	nearly imperceptible
To the eye—and	silent. It's not that I
Have nothing to say,	but rather too much,
Attempting to steer	a reef of words
That could express	—if only—
If only combined	to grasp a piece of
Solid ground, fading	back whence I came.

One Day

Michelle HARRISON | *Painting*



King of the Jungle Yard

Jane RUSSELL | *Poetry*

“Dent-de-lion” sounds romantic,
“tooth of a lion” after the dented leaves.
But it has the heart of a bully,
chewing its way onto innocent lawns
and muscling out good grass.

Self-planting deep in pliant soil,
it fools us with golden flowers,
easy to love till they morph
into gangly puffballs and naked stems
after seeds disperse to clone
a hundred replicas in our yard.

Distaste for chemicals leaves us only
back-breaking labor to dig them out
one tenacious taproot at a time.
Whether I stoop or squat,
my put-upon thighs protest.
Show some respect, you smug domestic
villain, dent-de-lion

Contentment

Timothy POLNASZEK | *Photography*
for Tobias Polnaszek

Theology Library

Justin HALLORAN | *Poetry*

The title on the shelf reads “Disarming Beauty.”
A religious title. Filled with self-help on your own nature.
The nature of any religious writing.
Turning, pages on
Volumes good things. At least for good cause.
“Disarming Beauty” It’s hard to make out.
Somewhere on the middle shelf
Leaning its head on “Homosexuality and the Catholic Church.”
This must be the self-help section.
A helping hand to heaven.
Oh those lost, beautiful souls who found love.
The shelf sits alone in the room, books leaning lovingly cheek to cheek.

Turning pages out of religious historical texts.
Where the days of magical women burned
Brighter than the souls in hell
And the haloed angels fell
Laughing, having flown too close to the sun.
Maybe they will drown in painted water
With wet wings.
Maybe God flings from heaven the love
Of his own matrimony wearing collars who promise
A forgotten meaning.
The face that kissed God also kissed
Tears of the innocent filled with fear.

Turning from the pages of the past
I came upon a sullen chapter of war.
Painted red blood crossed
The shields of every man to the
Name of God cast down every brother and friend.
Shame pumps the same red blood.
The colors became crazed, raised up on high
To forget the fires burned genocide
In the name of a God called divine.
When blood is spilled for lust.
In hell we end, where all we must.

Two days later back in the same room.
I see the books are gone
The shelves laid bare and the pages left lying.
Book stands left barren, naked, now kissing
The floor. Empty shells lie forgotten and dying.
The self-help shelf is no more.
And I turn and leave through the door.



Montross, Virginia

Paul TOSCANO | Photography Cyanotype

Gloria



in excelsis Deo

Absolved

Kate WEAVER | *Poetry*

I felt that great weight
And I chose the words carefully
Standing
Waiting
For others to whisper their secrets
And fight silently behind the curtain
Pay no attention
And focus on those deeds in words—
 repeating them over and over
 so you don't forget and you don't
 stutter
My knees bent into that sign
I spoke in rehearsed rhythm—
Then you scoffed at my sins
And tossed me a Hail Mary
As if paying someone for their silence
With watered-down mercy.

Gloria in Excelsis

Eunjae BENSON | *Drawing*



For Lily

Marc CHIURCO | Poetry

I will sit and wait for you
Where the wander lily grows
And the sweet pine sap
Sticks to bare toes.

The sun doesn't rise there,
It only sets.
And the lonely river fisherman
Catches salmon in his net.

The mountain to the east
Takes up all the sky,
Casting shadows on the meadow valley
Where peacefully we'd lie.

The moon is always full,
Lighting up the night.
The unmarked stars,
Countless in our sight.

There will be a peaceful rest,
A land absent of distress.
Where the wander lily grows,
There, I pray my Lily goes.

Czeslawa Kwoka

Bethany GAREIS | Stipple

Joy

Sharon JOHNS | Photography







Summer Rain


Kate WEAVER | *Poetry*

Every raindrop an argument
Each kerplop a raging storm
But children freely leap and bound
Across stones and into puddles
If only our days were splashing
 falling smashing
 on the ground
We could indeed jump and dance
Like ducklings in the rain

Arnhem, Netherlands

Sabrina BOLOGNA | *Photography*





Being broken:

Joseph HAMILTON | *Poetry*

When I look into people
And see their eyes
Peeking into their souls
Do I see them
Or do I see myself?
Do I see myself the
Broken

Battered

Worn

Person I am trying to hide?
Or do I see them
Broken

Battered

Worn

Desperately grabbing for hope?
Who is the one that
Needs to be fixed?

Maybe we're both broken
Maybe it's just me
Maybe

Please break me more.
Let me become so broken
That no one can fix me.
Then I will be able to understand
How they think
How they feel
How they break.

Mellilla

Katherine MCCARTHY | *Photography*



The Owl

Rory WITKOWSKI | *Watercolor*

Last Things

John Paul HAMILTON | *Short Story*

The two preachers left in good spirits, confident he was returning Home. The nurse tucked the blankets under his white thighs. Although there was no wife or daughter or son with him, the face of the man with heart disease was golden and radiant like dawn.

On his rounds, the new chaplain entered the room with a purple stole clutched like a purse in front of him. He counseled the near-deceased to accept the true church's salvation, confession, and last rites. The man, his body becoming chilled for death, recognized the priest, who hovered over him with oils ready to apply. It was the son of his Wednesday housecleaner, Juanita. Only a boy, really. "No, no." The boy didn't speak like his mother. He spoke in the man's own accent, in the man's tongue, in the man's manner of speaking.

The young priest left, feeling the weight of the man's soul pressing deeper onto his shoulders. He asked the Lady of Guadalupe for the mister's soul. Inside the white room, leaning forward in his sickbed, the old man tried to tuck his cold feet under his three blankets, but it was no use. His body had no warmth left inside of it.



About the Contributors

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Submission Guidelines

Agora accepts submissions of fiction; poetry; visual art, including digital art; and photography. Through an anonymous reading and viewing, student editors select works to be published. Selections are based on originality, artistic quality, and space in the publication. Only student entries are eligible for the literature and art-photography awards. Winners are presented a certificate of creative achievement during the Academic Awards Banquet at the end of the spring semester and receive a monetary award by mail. Deadlines for submissions are announced every semester in the fall and early spring.

Submission Guidelines

Please edit written works for grammar and mechanics prior to sending. Send each individual work, whether written or art-photography, as an individual digital file, labeled with the title of the work. Send all photographic or artistic works as JPG files of a minimum size of 2-3 mg (300 dpi or 2000-3000 kb). Cell phone photos must be in this range; if enhanced, cell phone photos lose the original resolution. Always send your original high-res photo with the enhanced version. Written submissions must be sent as Word files. Send all submissions as email attachments; do not paste them into the body of your email message. In the body of your email message, include title, medium of visual art, your name, and the date of your submission. Send all submissions to agora@bac.edu.

Editorial Statement: *As is the case with any publisher, the Editorial Elves of Agora reserve the right to make any necessary aesthetic or grammatical changes to submitted works. For photography, photos may at times be cropped to enhance their composition. For poetry, editing may involve taking out a stanza, adding a title, or changing passages and sometimes words. Prose works will be edited for any grammatical errors. Such editorial changes are made only to enhance the excellence of a submission and retain its integrity. Editors will contact contributors about any major changes.*

Categories and Number of Submissions Accepted for Consideration

- Short stories (1300 word-limit): Two stories
- Flash-fiction (500 word-limit): Two stories
- Vignettes (500 word-limit): Two vignettes
- Prose poems (250 word-limit): Two prose poems
- Poetry: Six poems
- Drawings, paintings, mixed media, digital art: Six submissions
- Photography: Six photographs

Please send no more than 10 submissions altogether.

All contributors must be members of the Belmont Abbey Community: students, faculty, monks, administrators, staff, and alumni.